

## PLATFORM FOR REFLECTION ON CULTURAL POLITICS (PRPC)

The BIACS 2 is poised to open having just recently announced its complete artists list and schedule of exhibition events. There will be two main venues (CAAC and the Atarazanas). A few urban interventions are planned to occur (in balconies, shop windows, and one on a bridge over the river). In opportunistic salutation of the exhibition's mission: "the event will benefit the promotion of the Andalusian capital as a touristic destination", the King will herald the Biennial's inauguration.

One month before the opening of the BIACS 2, the only official information available to the public regarding the event was the text that Okwui Enwezor read in Madrid at the commercial contemporary art fair ARCO. He will again present his precis in the next days at the Basel Art Fair, under the title "*The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society*". In the exhibition, it is his thematic premise to: "to unmask those machineries that decimate and waste social, economic and political interconnections, looking for a return to the logics of totalization".

Enwezor's text is insightful and culturally resonant. Given the opportunity to expand the thematic precedent he first expressed at Documenta XI, we suggest that BIACS 2 is a new excuse for the curator to transform into tourism all the dramatic outlets that our political geo-history provides him - specifically issues surrounding the immigrant population from Africa who work in Spain, the Middle East Wars, Latin American insurgence, etc. As Giorgio Agamben affirms, there is no greater temple for capitalism as the museum art space contemplated and consumed by hordes of tourists.

It seems paradoxical that Okwui Enwezor asks: "how can art play an integral, and not only peripheral role in relation to the global challenge that affects both artistic production and reception, especially in light of the damaging effects of reactionary, conservative and fundamentalist politics in all social structures of the world today"? However, why doesn't he question the oversaturated model of the Biennial that functions, almost exclusively, to serve geotourism. Nor does he question one of the formats that has contributed the most to the banalization of contemporary art exhibitions, specifically the failure of the blockbuster to evoke effective and nuanced reactions and understanding on the part of the public. The climate of the Spectacle breeds ignorant public approval as opposed to a deep and multi-layered individual critical response. In other words, souvenir shopping supercedes nuanced personal investigation.

In his statement, Enwezor intends the Bienal to "...Explore the alterations in the world's social structures. ...BIACS 2 is conceived as an opportunity to examine the contradictory logic of distance and proximity represented by the dialectical structure of many of the artistic proceedings in the last decade". Yet, we submit that the curator has not bothered to publicly acknowledge that the BIACS 2 is being financed with public funds managed by a consortium of businessmen. Nor has he addressed the fact that this grand scale event should reflect the city of Seville and its own uniquely rich cultural, historic and artistic fabric. Okwui's lack of efforts to connect BIACS with its local context impedes not only the exhibition's possibility for meaningful resonate, but also offends the very people who have agreed to serve as its host. Many local artistic and cultural projects have suffered from budget reductions in order to safeguard the benefits of "stellar projects" like the BIACS. The imposition of the BIACS on public funds carries meaningful and heartfelt local "collateral effects" on the existing cultural fabric.

The title of Enwezor's text is revealing: "*The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society*", for we think that in all this about the BIACS perfectly operates the phantasmagoria in which consist the transformation and metamorphic processes of any object into artistic commodity, into exchange value. So to say, that the illusion in this case is produced when a business operation financed with public funds, directed to empower and activate local economy, to attract tourism and investment, at the same contributing to generate pride and consent between the patrons --be them public or private, and the citizenship, is presented as a reflective event, that "will look beyond the metaphor of the city and begin to reflect upon the complex nature of adjacency and

the asymptotic importance of residing next-to, outside-of, or with-in a given site", in the words of its curator.

But if Enwezor, quoting Walter Benjamin at the beginning of his text, thinks that: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of emergency in which we live in is the rule, not the exception", we do not understand how he doesn't realize that we are certainly confronting an emergency, the one suffered by the cultural politics that must apply to a region like Andalucía and to a city like Seville, that certainly must commit with its modernization for a dialogue between the local and the global, but not receiving as first show the scenification of an oppression: that suffered by a local art community paradoxically weakened by "international aid". The idea that the globalization of Art Biennials is a pale reflection of this permanent "state of exception" Benjamin talks about is something that the international cultural critique -Agamben, Jameson, Löwy, etc.- agree on. What does Enwezor intend then, placing in the frontispice of his project the benjaminian thesis of the state of exception? As we know, Benjamin produced his text in direct confrontation with the jurist Carl Schmitt, legal support of national socialism in Germany in the thirties. Schmitt's thesis is more coherent with Enwezor's resolution, if the "state of exception" is the rule, let's found our conduct on it, let's make our laws according to exceptions: suspension of liberties, martial law, concentration camp, etc. Cultural criticism has warned it, spectacle is the permanent state of exception: ...let's make museums continuing art festivals ...let music conservatories celebrate perpetual anniversaries ...let the book fair rule the time in which citizens must read...

Even though Okwui Enwezor hasn't yet released the list of artists that will participate in the BIACS 2, we know he has invited artists as interesting as Yto Barrada or Ursula Biemann. We understand that they are not supposed to know about the upsetting effects that the event implies for the cultural fabric of the city, but we believe that the curator that organizes it must be committed to know the context in which it is presented and how his proposal is funded and managed, and accordingly inform the artists about these circumstances. Peter Friedl, for example, another of the invited artists to the event, without this basic information will not be able to get the target right of his uneasiness dialectics, aimed as it is his usual proceeding, to the institution that invites him. But as Okwui Enwezor has not carried out this informative effort, although he knows and we have sent to him all the texts that the PRPC has generated, our Platform initiates a communication campaign to the participating artists delivering our texts and reflections to them, at the same time as we carry on the continuing adhesions campaign.

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